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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a rationale for serving gifted students in the regular classroom and offers guidelines for recognizing students who are gifted in the seven types of intelligence proposed by Howard Gardner. Stressed is the importance of creating in the classroom a community of learners that allows all children to actively explore ideas and experiences together. The teacher's role in such a community is seen to be that of a facilitator. Specific characteristics are listed of students gifted in: (1) linguistic intelligence, (2) logical/mathematical intelligence, (3) spatial intelligence, (4) intrapersonal intelligence, (5) musical intelligence, (6) bodily/kinesthetic intelligence, and (7) interpersonal intelligence. (DB)

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ED 371 541

Giftedness in the Regular Classroom

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Can we meet the needs of our gifted children in the regular classroom?

I believe we can.

We need to create an environment together where we catch one another doing good. One where students are engaged in shaping their days.

The Community of Learners

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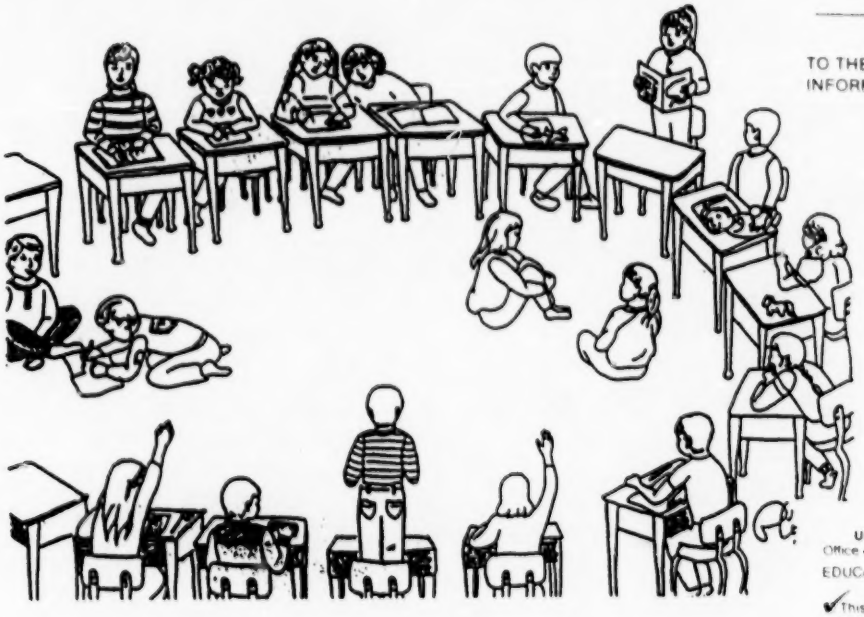

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An environment conducive for a community of learners to actively explore ideas and experiences together, as they construct meaning and communicate understandings in cooperation.

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An environment that is formed and molded by the learners—One where everyone can make a difference as he/she takes responsibility for ongoing learning.

An environment where "making mistakes" spurs on further use of the language and motivates the search to make meaning.

An environment where kids are talking, writing, listening, and interacting as they support and build upon one another's ideas.

An environment that encourages experimenting with communicating, as individuals learn about and use their strengths and talents.

An environment where kids are making decisions about their learning by explaining, questioning, and hitch-hiking from one another. (They know what it is that they still do not understand.)

An environment that encourages a balance between creative and logical thinking within a meaningful context.

An environment where kids are developing an awareness and a respect for "the voice" of each other as they naturally build self-confidence.

An environment that complements the learning strengths and talents of children so they might be ever reaching their potential in school and through life.

An environment where the community of learners extends beyond the walls of the school, as we put into practice the philosophy, "EVERYONE A TEACHER, EVERYONE A LEARNER."

Implications for Teachers

Teachers joining the community of learners become aware that their changing role is that of a facilitator. As teachers truly facilitate, learning becomes something that students do for themselves not for someone else, e.g., the teacher. Differentiation begins to happen as students enjoy learning according to their strength and passion areas. Students learn how to learn as they become involved in learning as a process rather than in lessons with closure.

The teacher begins to listen with new ears, to observe with new eyes, to provide scaffolding where needed, (strategies) to find a mentor to join a child with a passion area, to ask a question to encourage higher level thinking by being cognizant of the following:

beginning questions with ... (why? how?)

avoiding being judgmental ... ("Oh, isn't that good.")

avoiding being directive or leading ... ("Why don't you try it this way and see what happens?)

instead be reassuring ... ("I'm sure you will find ways to solve your problem.)

instead be reflective ... (I can see you have given a lot of thought to your conclusion.)

Teachers enjoy new learning journeys as they become aware of the seven intelligences as adapted by Thomas Armstrong from Howard Gardener's work in *Frames of Mind*. Armstrong writes for parents and teachers with a list of the possible criteria for each of the intelligences as well as suggestions for ways to accommodate students.

(Book *In Their Own Way* by Thomas Armstrong)

The following are examples of Dr. Armstrong's works.

Linguistic Intelligence

- like to write,
- spin tall tales or tell jokes and stories,
- have a good memory for names, places, dates, or trivia,
- enjoy reading books in their spare time,
- spell words accurately and easily,
- appreciate nonsense rhymes and tongue twisters,
- like doing crossword puzzles or playing games such as scrabble or anagrams,

Logical — Mathematical Intelligence

- compute arithmetic problems quickly in their head,
- enjoy using computers,
- ask questions like "Where does the universe end?" "What happens after we die?" and "When did time begin?"
- play chess, checkers, or other strategy games, and win,
- reason things out logically and clearly,
- devise experiments to test out things they don't understand,
- spend lots of time working on logic puzzles such as Rubik's cube.

Special Intelligence

- spend free time engaged in art activities,
- report clear visual images when thinking about something,
- easily read maps, charts and diagrams,
- like it when you show movies, slides or photographs,
- enjoy doing jigsaw puzzles or mazes,
- daydreams a lot,

Intrapersonal Intelligence

- display a sense of independence or a strong will,
- react with strong opinions when controversial topics are being discussed,
- seem to live in their own private, inner world,
- like to be alone to pursue some personal interest, hobby, or project,
- seem to have a deep sense of self-confidence,
- march to the beat of a different drummer in their style of dress their behavior, or their general attitude,
- motivate themselves to do well on independent study projects,

Musical Intelligence

- play a musical instrument,
- remember melodies of songs,
- tell you when a musical note is off-key,
- say they need to have music on in order to study,
- collect records or tapes,
- sing songs to themselves,
- keep time rhythmically to music,

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

- do well in competitive sports,
- move, twitch, tap, or fidget while sitting in a chair,
- engage in physical activities such as swimming, biking, hiking, or skate-boarding,
- need to touch people when they talk to them,
- enjoy scary amusement rides,
- demonstrate skill in a craft like woodworking, sewing, or carving,
- cleverly mimic other people's gestures, mannerisms, or behaviors,

Interpersonal Intelligence

- have a lot of friends.
- socialize a great deal at school or around the neighborhood,
- seem to be "street smart,"
- get involved in after-school group activities,
- serve as the "family mediator" when disputes arise,
- enjoy playing group games with other children,
- have a lot of empathy for the feelings of others,

The following is a scenario with some transcription of the students' actual talk, from my first grade classroom, to present the community of learners in action, where the children are meeting their many intelligences (talents).

Ben (logical and linguistic talent areas) came to school in September, in love with Bald Eagles. He shared wonderful illustrations and stories both fiction and non-fiction with the community of learners. He informed us that 'bald' is the old English word for white.

However, he often found it difficult to join the class activities, which was the case one September day during the theme all about colors. The class was involved in miming the song *Stolen Rainbows*, where an old moose gathers up the colors of the rainbow and stuffs them into a sack leaving the world dull and gray. One student would be the moose while the rest of the class would be the colors of the rainbow.

Teacher, (as facilitator, thinking about how to naturally involve Ben) "Everyone is having such fun, however we need a problem for the moose to encounter. The colors of the rainbow are at the mercy of the old moose. He can't be allowed to win so easily."

Chelsea, (music, her talent) "Well, the colors win when they find a crack in the old sack and wiggle to freedom" as she began to sing the part from the song to support her argument.

Jeff, (interpersonal and logical talent area, relaxed as he mimed the part of the old moose) "Oh, but the old moose gets them back every time."

Ben (his face lighting up as he saw an opportunity to build on to an idea, and incorporate his passion area) "I'll be a bald eagle and dive bomb the moose and help the colors."

The whole mime took a new direction with new problems to solve. Ben proudly experienced using his passion as he made his learning meaningful and personal. He felt a valuable part of the community of learners as he built on to the learning of others as well unto

his own. Ben came the next day dressed as a bald eagle and we enjoyed the mime for many days. He also worked on an individual project about bald eagles for months which he shared in the school Science Fair in February. The curriculum, for Ben, was relevant and internalized to meet his needs.

The above real-life action transcribed from the community of learners in my classroom is one of many which I shared at the SAGE Conference to bring alive the way gifted students can meet their needs in a community of learners in the regular classroom.

Conclusion

Learning is a process for our gifted children, one where they, above all, are learning about themselves as learners.

Parents are an integral part of this learning and are needed in the classrooms as facilitators and questioners. Parents join the community of learners as they too write; to learn about the changes in education, to share stories and to model a love for learning.

THE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS could be the answer for meeting the needs of the gifted in the classroom.

VOGOTSKY, a leading educator writes *What a child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow.*